2. Built Environment

Introduction

The structural make-up of the community.

The condition and make-up of the built environment of an area is often used as a barometer for measuring the health of a community. These conditions help determine the character of an area and influence its image. A community with attractive and sound structures, extensive and convenient transportation systems, and a mixture of different types of housing is more likely to attract new residents and businesses, thereby ensuring its long-term viability.

The following section will present information and data describing structural conditions, development and redevelopment opportunities, housing characteristics and transportation networks in the Central Area.

Single-family home, Central Area

Structural Conditions and Construction Activity

Data Collection

A data inventory was collected through a windshield survey of the 13,309 properties within the study area. The conditions that were assessed include the number of units, the existing land use, and conditions of the structure, yard and landscaping, sidewalks, and swales.

In order to evaluate more subjective categories and enable them to be statistically correlated, a rating system was developed. The criteria that was used is described as follows. **Figures 2.1 – 2.4** illustrate the results of this analysis.

Structure **(Figure 2.1)**

(4) GOOD – No obvious maintenance or repairs necessary.

(3) FAIR – Minor maintenance or cosmetic repairs necessary. Paint, trim, or other ornamental pieces need repair or replacement, etc.

(2) DETERIORATED – Major material replacement required, minor structural damage, but likely salvageable. Missing roofing material, leaning or broken porches, broken windows, awnings or siding, etc.

(1) DILAPIDATED – Missing basic construction materials and structural damage that is likely beyond repair.

(0) NO STRUCTURE

Yard and Landscaping **(Figure 2.2)**

(3) GOOD – Grass is mowed, site is well kept and generally free of trash.

(2) PARTIALLY KEPT – Grass is no longer than 8 inches high, small patches of dead grass or dirt, some trash is evident but could be cleaned in one hour or less.

(1) UNATTENDED – Grass and weeds longer than 8 inches high, significant patches of dead grass and dirt, substantial amount of trash, abandoned vehicles, appliances, etc. on site.

(0) DOES NOT EXIST - No yard or Landscaping

Sidewalks **(Figure 2.3)**

(2) GOOD – Level surface, few cracks.

(1) NEEDS REPAIR – ¾ inch or greater vertical separation, instability, and/or surface scaling of 25% or greater on a sidewalk flag.

(0) NO SIDEWALKS

Swales **(Figure 2.4)**

(I) IMPROVED – Grass, Gravel / Concave

(PN) POROUS/ NOT IMPROVED – Grass, Gravel / Convex or flat

(N) NON-POROUS – Asphalt, Concrete, Compacted soil

(0) NO SWALE

Figure 2.1

Figure 2.2

figure 2.3

figure 2.4

Swale and Landscaping Conditions

The definition of a swale, as it pertains to this report, is generally the strip of land that lies between the parcel property line, or sidewalk, and the road. Swales have different roles in the urban environment. They function as drainage areas for storm water runoff, as well as a buffer area between automotive and pedestrian traffic. Swales also have an aesthetic function as an island for landscaping.

As part of the CAP field survey, staff looked at the shape and porosity of the swales for every parcel in the Central Area. The following criteria were used in order to describe the swale conditions:

- No Swale – The street and property line or sidewalk are directly adjacent
- Non Porous – The swale is paved over or filled in with other non-porous material
- Porous, Not Improved – The swale consists of grass, loose gravel or earth but it is flat or not pitched
- Improved – The swale consists of grass, loose gravel or earth and is pitched in order to improve drainage

The majority (73.9%) of the swales in the area are “Porous, Not Improved”, usually consisting of grass or earth. The swales that cause the most problems are the Non Porous swales that have been paved over or have been filled with concrete (13%). These can contribute significantly to the flooding problem in some areas. Improved swales represent 6.1% of the total. Most of these are a result of the city’s recent “Swale Reclamation Project” in the area. **Figure 2.4** illustrates the distribution of the different swale types.

The condition of the landscaping in the Central Area was also surveyed (**Figure 2.2**). The majority of the properties, (64%) were found to be well attended and in good condition. A significant number of properties however, were found to be either, “Partially Attended”(20.5%), or “Unattended”(9%). The remaining properties surveyed were found to have no landscaping.

Development and Redevelopment

The Central Area presents a great opportunity and unique challenge in terms of redevelopment. The area contains a large number of vacant properties in both residentially and commercially zoned districts. There are 1,136 vacant properties in the area equating to nearly 222 acres. This presents a significant opportunity for infill development. However, the relatively small size of each individual property presents a considerable problem to developers due to the difficulty in aggregating a substantial number of parcels that will produce an economically viable development. The key to the redevelopment of this area will be the ability of private developers and public agencies to amass multiple parcels of land.

While there has been redevelopment in the area, it has been mostly limited to individual single-family homes because of the size and spatial disbursement of the vacant properties. There has been some construction of both owned and rental, multi-family residential units (“City View” and “Regal Trace”), however few, if any, vacant lots remain to accommodate more of this type of development.

There are approximately 4,000 dwelling units available in the Northwest Regional Activity Center (NW-RAC), totaling 10,900 units. The NW-RAC contains about 30% of the land area of the Central Area. This designation was created in 1999 in order to provide flexibility for redevelopment activities and to preserve single-family residential neighborhoods within the area (See Economic Environment for further detail.)

Housing

Housing Types

An important factor in determining the character of an area is the number and spatial distribution of the various housing types. **Table 2.1** shows the number of structures by housing type and the number of units by housing type. **Figure 2.5** depicts the distribution of housing types by the number of units in the structure. As shown on the map, the majority of multi-family structures are generally located in the southern and eastern sections of the area with exclusively single-family areas in pockets in the western and northern sections. Overall, there are single-family homes sprinkled throughout the entire area. This distribution is determined by the official land use designations (**Figure 3.1**), which dictate the allowable residential density, as well as by the housing market in the area.

TABLE 2.1 - Structures and Units by Housing Type, Central Area Field Survey

HOUSING TYPE	# OF STRUCTURES	# OF UNITS
Single Family	7,297 (75%)	7,297 (32.5%)
Duplex (2 units)	1,222 (13%)	2,444 (11%)
Multi Family – 2 to 10 units	941 (10%)	4,234 (19%)
Multi Family – greater than 10 units	215 (2%)	8,424 (37.5%)
TOTAL	**9,675**	**22,399**

Source: City of Fort Lauderdale

Housing Units

The total number of dwellings as reported in the 1990 census is 19,366. This compares to a count of 22,399 for the CAP field survey conducted between November 1999 and March 2000. The difference in these figures can be partially attributed to the growth in population (1,125) and to the growth in the number of households (293) between 1990 and 1998 (Claritas). The discrepancy can also be attributed to the different methods of data collection.

Staff feels that the field survey figures are likely to be the most accurate as it involved the physical inspection of each property and structure in the Central Area and is the more recent count.

The following tables illustrate the number of occupied housing units in the Central Area (**Table 2.2**) and for the City of Fort Lauderdale as a whole (**Table 2.3**) according to 1990 census data. As illustrated in these tables, the Central Area has a considerably lower percent of vacant units than that of the City of Fort Lauderdale. This is probably a result of lower housing costs in the area as compared to the rest of the City, as well as the large number of vacant parcels in the area.

TABLE 2.2 - Dwelling Units, Central Area

TYPE OF DWELLING UNIT	# OF UNITS	%
Occupied	17,011	87.84 %
Vacant	2,355	12.16 %
TOTAL	19,366	100 %

Source: City of Fort Lauderdale, OCCP

TABLE 2.3 - Dwelling Units, City of Fort Lauderdale

TYPE OF DWELLING UNIT	# OF UNITS	%
Occupied	66,499	81.66 %
Vacant	14,935	18.34 %
TOTAL	81,434	100 %

Source: City of Fort Lauderdale, OCCP

Figure 2.5

Residential Density

Residential density is defined as the number of dwelling units per acre of land. The City of Fort Lauderdale uses the "net" acreage of an area for density calculations. The net acreage of an area does not include land devoted to public right-of-ways and other such uses.

For the purposes of this document, residential density is calculated using the net acreage of all residentially zoned districts. This is determined using GIS property data and City of Fort Lauderdale zoning information. The acreage includes developed properties as well as vacant properties.

Based upon 1990 Census data, the net density of the Central Area is 8.6 dwelling units per acre. This is determined by dividing the number of residential units (19,366) by the net acreage of the area (2,244).

Using the same methodology, the density of the entire City is determined to be 8.4 dwelling units per acre. This indicates that the density for the Central Area is just slightly higher than for the City as a whole.

The percentage of land that is zoned for residential uses, however, is higher in the Central Area (64%) than in the entire City (56%). As a result, the net density utilizing the acreage for the entire area rather than just those sections with residential zoning yields a significantly higher number for the Central Area (5.5 dwelling units per acre) than for the entire City (4.7 dwelling units per acre).

By utilizing the CAP field survey, the current number of dwelling units in the Central Area is 22,399. The net density for the Central Area utilizing the field survey number is 10.0 dwelling units per acre. Since field information was only collected for the Central Area, the current City residential density is not able to be determined.

Housing Units by Tenure

The term "housing units by tenure" refers to the ownership status of the person or persons occupying a dwelling. This section will show the percentages of owner occupied as opposed to renter occupied dwellings in the Central Area. Changes in the composition of housing tenure can have significant real and perceived consequences. High percentages of renter occupied dwelling units are often perceived as having a negative impact on an area.

The following tables illustrate the number of housing units by tenure of all occupied units in the central area, (**Table 2.4**) and for the City of Fort Lauderdale as a whole (**Table 2.5**) according to the 1990 census data.

As derived from the data, the Central Area has a considerably higher percentage of "renter occupied " units than the City as a whole. This is likely a result of the large numbers of multi-family dwellings in the area as well as a result of many lower income families being unable to secure home ownership.

TABLE 2.4 - Housing Units by Tenure, Central Area

TYPE OF DWELLING UNIT	# OF UNITS	%
Owner	6,746	39.66 %
Renter	10,265	60.34 %
TOTAL	17,011	100 %

Source: City of Fort Lauderdale, OCCP

TABLE 2.5 - Housing Units by Tenure, City of Fort Lauderdale

TYPE OF DWELLING UNIT	# OF UNITS	%
Owner	35,876	53.95 %
Renter	30,623	46.05 %
TOTAL	66,499	100 %

Source: City of Fort Lauderdale, OCCP

Sub-Standard Housing

As part of its 1989 comprehensive planning efforts, the City undertook an extensive study of its northwest quadrant, an area that comprises much of the Central Area. This study found that approximately 25% of the area consists of vacant residential parcels.

This condition was verified again during the ***Slum and Blight Study*** undertaken to establish the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA), in the central part of the city. Furthermore, analysis by the Community Area Planning (CAP) staff confirms the vacant and underutilized land uses.

The ***Safe Neighborhood Study*** also found that approximately 25% of all structures in the northwest quadrant were substandard. This study was updated by the City's ***1995 Neighborhood Conditions Study*** (***NCS***) to establish the slum and blight criteria for the CRA.

The ***NCS*** determined that 73% of all structures were found to evidence varying degrees of disrepair with 28.5% rated deteriorating or dilapidated and in need of major rehabilitation or demolition. According to the 1990 census, there are over 9,400 structures in the northwest quadrant. If 28.5% of them are substandard, then 2,679 units require either rehabilitation or demolition and replacement.

The only measurement made available by the U.S. Census regarding the condition of dwelling units pertains to dwelling units lacking some or all plumbing facilities. Using this standard, the 1990 Census reports a total of 472 such units for the City. These units are located in 18 census tracts throughout the City. However, 49% are located in four tracts, three of which (415, 417, 408) are located within the Central Area.

CAP Field Survey

According to the CAP field survey, there are 265 (2.7%) residential structures classified as "dilapidated" or "deteriorated" and in need of significant repair or replacement of materials (**Figure 2.1)**. Furthermore, 2,974 structures (30.8%) are rated as "fair" indicating that some repairs are

necessary and that these problems are visible from the street. Together, the survey shows that a total of 3,239 residential structures, or approximately 33% of the housing of the Central Area, are in need of some type of repair.

This information reveals that there is a need for substantial renovation. Since many of the people in the area cannot afford to pay for these renovations or repairs, much of the funding must come from local, state or federal sources.

Regal Trace Apartments

Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing Needs

The ***Year 2000 Survey of Housing, Economic, Social Service and Community Development Needs****,* undertaken by the City's Community and Economic Development Department, identifies the following housing needs:

- More affordable housing for both renters and special needs population and families;
- More home ownership opportunities;
- More handicapped accessible housing;
- Housing repairs, both rental and owner occupied; and
- Infill housing on vacant residential land.

There is a significant need for affordable rental housing in the area. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rental voucher program, the housing authority will make up the difference between the fair market rent amount and 30% of the household's monthly gross income for eligible tenants. An eligible household is one that has an income that does not exceed 50% of the median income of the county or metropolitan area. This figure for Broward County is $16,362. The Central Area contains 4,249 households with an income of less than $10,000 (Claritas, 1998) and approximately 6,500 households that have an income below the 50% threshold, representing about 36% of the total households in the Central Area. This significant percentage indicates that many households would be eligible for rental assistance through this program.

According to the City's ***Consolidated Plan***, there is also a need for affordable "for sale" houses in the Central Area. Affordable "for sale" housing is usually understood as households that pay no more than 30 – 35% of their gross income for principal, interest, taxes and insurance. Based upon the Central Area's median income of $21,046 (Claritas, 1998), the average affordable

monthly mortgage including taxes and insurance should not exceed $613. This indicates the need for considerable subsidization of housing purchases for buyers in the area.

Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Programs

Purchase Assistance Program

The Purchase Assistance Program provides down payment and closing cost assistance to eligible first time homebuyers. Up to $10,000 is available for the purchase of an existing standard single-family home and up to $15,000 for the purchase of a newly constructed single-family home. The funds are provided in the form of 0 % interest, deferred payment loans and are secured by mortgages filed against the property. The program is funded through HOME and SHIP.

HOME is a federal low-income housing program whose purpose is to provide funds to local jurisdictions to in order to strengthen public–private partnerships that provide affordable housing.

SHIP (State Housing Initiative Partnership program) is a State low-income housing program that provides funds to local governments as an incentive for the creation of local housing partnerships.

Section 8 Rental Program

The Housing Authority of the City of Fort Lauderdale administers Section 8 rental vouchers to subsidize rent for eligible, low to very low, income families and persons. These are administered to 1,428 families per year citywide.

Rehabilitation assistance for Homeowners

This program provides rehabilitation assistance to lower-income homeowners who need to bring their homes up to standard condition. The assistance is provided in the form of a zero interest deferred payment loan and is secured by a mortgage on the property. The program is funded by HOME, SHIP and CDBG (Community Redevelopment Block Grants). In addition, emergency repairs which are an immediate threat to health and safety, such as roof, electrical or plumbing problems, will be made for homes owned and occupied by lower-income households who do not meet the loan to value standard.

Replacement Housing

This program replaces homes that are beyond repair and are occupied by lower income homeowners. Unless prohibited by zoning, a new single-family home is constructed on the same lot. The assistance is provided in the form of a zero interest deferred payment loan, and is available to eligible homeowners citywide, and may be funded by HOME, SHIP and CDBG.

Rental Rehabilitation Program

This program provides property owners with up to 50% of the per-unit rehab costs for units that are affordable to lower income households. The funds are provided in the form of a zero interest loan. The program is available citywide.

Transportation

Mass Transit

Bus Transit

Bus transit in the Central Area, as well as the entire City of Fort Lauderdale, is provided by the Broward County Transit (BCT) Division. Countywide, BCT transports 81,000 passengers daily and 25 million annually.

BCT's active fleet consists of 232 full size buses and 22 mini-buses of which 181 full size and 18 mini-buses are in service on a regular basis. There are 38 fixed bus routes throughout Broward County.

Because of its density and proximity to the Downtown, the Central Area is one of the most extensively served. There are 12 routes that run through or are adjacent to the Central Area, and the BCT Central bus terminal is located on Broward Boulevard along the edge of the Central Area (**Figure 2.6**).

Central Bus Terminal

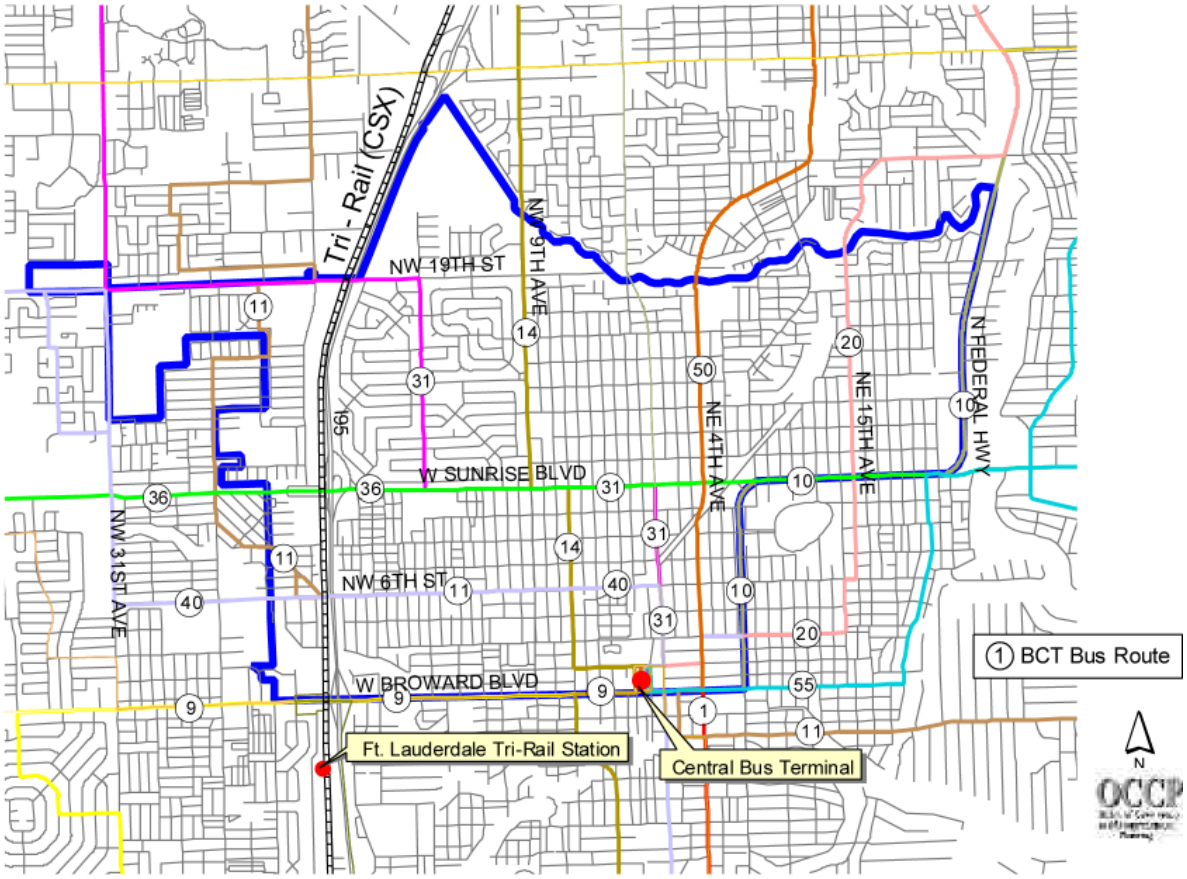
Rail Transit

The Tri–Rail commuter train also serves the Central Area. The Tri-Rail operates on the CSX railroad, which generally follows the path of the I-95 corridor. The trains run seven days a week from 18 stations along a 71-mile corridor connecting Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach Counties.

There are 14 trains running North and South on weekdays and 6 and 7 trains on Saturdays and Sundays, respectively. The ridership is 8,500 on weekdays; 4,000 on Saturdays; and 3,000 on Sundays.

A Tri-Rail station is located at the intersection of I-95 and Broward Boulevard that serves the Central Area (**Figure 2.6**) and is connected to the Downtown via a shuttle bus system that meets each incoming train.

FIGURE 2.6 - Mass Transit Routes, Central Area



Central Area Routes

Roadways

The Central Area is fully served by an extensive street network. Roads are classified according to their administrative authority and function. Administrative authority identifies the agency that has responsibility for roadway maintenance, operation and construction. Functional classifications are based on use and design standards. The Central Area contains the following State and County Roads; all other roads are under local jurisdiction.

State Roads

- Broward Boulevard – Principal Arterial
- Sunrise Boulevard – Principal Arterial
- US-1 (Federal Highway) – Principal Arterial
- Powerline Road – Principal Arterial
- NE 4th Avenue (north of Sunrise-minor arterial)

County Roads

- Andrews Avenue – Minor Arterial
- NW 7th Avenue (south of Sunrise Boulevard) – Minor Arterial
- NW/NE 6th Street – Collector
- NE 3rd Avenue (south of Sunrise Boulevard) – Collector
- NW 19th Street – Collector
- NW 23rd Avenue – Collector
- NW 27th Avenue – Collector

Sidewalks

A survey of the sidewalk conditions in the Central Area was also done as part of the CAP field survey. Criteria for rating sidewalk conditions was developed with the help of the city's engineering department. The sidewalk in front of each property was rated as either "Good" (97%) or "Needs Repair" (3%). This percentage is by the number of properties and not by any linear measurement.

There are, however, a significant number of properties within the Central Area that have no sidewalk (56%). The location and condition of sidewalks in the area can be seen in **Figure 2.3**.

Historic Structures

Nationally Designated

- Old Dillard High School, constructed in 1924, was designed by architect John M. Peterman in a T-shaped pueblo style. There are still remnants of a sign over the entrance which once said, "Colored School". In the mid-1990s, the school underwent a million dollar restoration. The school is currently being used for educational, cultural and museum purposes.

Locally Designated Historic Structures and Places

- St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, built in 1916, is believed to be the oldest building in Broward County continuously used for religious purposes. David Nathaniel Laramore, a Bahamian seminary, founded the church.

- North Side School, located at 120 NE 11th Street, was built in 1926 and is used as a school today.

- Warfield Park located at 1010 N. Andrews Avenue, was platted in 1911 and is used as a park today.

- North Woodlawn Cemetery, located at 900 NW 9 Avenue, was built in 1926 and is currently used as a cemetery.

An ongoing cooperative effort to catalog possible historic houses in the City's Northwest area of the City of Fort Lauderdale is being led by the Broward County Library System, Florida Atlantic

University and The Fort Lauderdale Historical Society. The ultimate goal of this effort is to publish a book about these houses and their owners as well as possibly apply for historic designations.

Urban Design Study

After approval by the City Commission in 1998, Edward D. Stone, Jr. & Associates with Iler Planning Group were contracted to assist the Office of Community & Comprehensive Planning in preparing an Urban Design Initiative for the City.

The Project Team, directed by a City Staff Focus Committee, is conducting a study of Fort Lauderdale's major urban design features. (Urban design refers to the attractiveness and connectivity of the City's roadways, neighborhoods, buildings and open spaces.) The result of this study will be an Urban Design Initiative, which sets forth guiding principles and recommendations to improve the City's urban design characteristics, and ultimately enhance the unique community identity of Fort Lauderdale. It will also outline construction of four initial "pilot" projects to physically show what the plan is designed to accomplish.